line 27: delete and replace by -- This patent application is incorporated by reference --.

Page 10, line 9: change "or/and" to -- and/or --;

line 16: change "in addition" to -- also --.

Page 11, line 19: change "are for example" to -- may include --;

line 21: after "vaccines" add -- may --.

Page 13, line 24: change "TTA" to -- TAA --.

Page 14, line 15: change "1 1" to -- one liter --.

Page 15, line 1: change "it" to -- this --;

line 9: after "ml" add -- of --;

line 11: before "can" add -- , --;

line 14: change "in the following" to -- infra --.

Page 16, line 8: change "in the" to -- on --.

Page 18, line 9: change "A good" to -- Good --.

IN THE CLAIMS

Cancel claims 1-26 without prejudice.

Add claims 27-36 which follow:

Claim 27: A method for early recognition of seroconversion, comprising: incubating a sample taken from a subject, under reducing conditions which prevent formation of covalent, cross linked molecular aggregates, with at least one polypeptide derived from a hepatitis C virus protein NS3 region which is immunologically reactive with said hepatitis C virus specific antibody, and determining binding of said antibody to said polypeptide to recognize seroconversion in said subject.

Claim 28: The method of claim 27, wherein said polypeptide has been modified at least one cysteine residue.

Claim 29: The method of claim 28, wherein said cysteine residue has been modified by covalent attachment of a modifying group.

Claim 30: The method of claim 28, wherein said cysteine residue has been replaced by another amino acid.

Claim 31: The method of claim 27, wherein said polypeptide consists of (a) at least amino acids 21-282 of SEQ ID NO: 9 and (b) a contiguous sequence of less than 20 amino acids that is not found in hepatitis C virus proteins, wherein (b) has been concatenated to the N or C terminus of (a), or an isolated polypeptide which is at least 90% homologous thereto, wherein at

least one cysteine of said polypeptide is modified either by replacing it with another artificial or natural amino acid, or by a modifying group.

Claim 32: The method of Claim 29, wherein said modifying group is maleimidodioctylamine, N-methly-maleinimide, iodoacetic acid, and iodoacetamide.

Claim 33: The method of claim 30, wherein said cysteine residue has been replaced by serine, or α-aminobutyric acid.

Claim 34: The method of claim 27, wherein said polypeptide consists of at least amino acids 19 to 290 of SEQ ID NO: 9, and no more than amino acids 9 to 300 of SEQ ID NO: 9.

Claim 35: The method of claim 27, wherein said polypeptide consists of at least amino acids 16 to 293 of SEQ ID NO: 9, and no more than amino acids 12 to 297 of SEQ ID NO: 9.

Claim 36: The method of claim 29, wherein said polypeptide consists of amino acids 14 to 295 of SEQ ID NO: 2.

Respectfully submitted,

FULBRIGHT & JAWORSKI L.L.P.

By ______________________

Norman D. Hanson
Reg. No. 30,946

666 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10105
(212) 318-3000